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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE.

"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."—JOHN iv., 20-29.

This, I think, is the earliest attempt to point out that which has excited in our day a great deal of discussion, and a great deal more of curiosity—namely, what is called *the Church of the Future.* Our Saviour, Jesus, is here holding high discourse with a Samaritan woman; and the theme, although ranging over wider ground, here touches the particular topic, What is to be the future of religious worship?

The Jewish idea of the church of the future we are not ignorant of. It was supposed by the Jews to be a church having a definite external organization, and therefore was called a historic church. It was believed by them that this church would extend itself by means of its external organization until it included within its bounds the populations of the whole globe. They did not understand that all the nations foreign to them were to remain in their own nationality, and adopt simply the moral principles which were inculcated by the Jewish teaching. On the contrary, they believed that they should literally bow themselves down and become disciples of the Jews, and be received by adoption into the Jewish church, so that in the end all the people on the globe should be members of the Jewish economy, and all the people on the globe in that economy should be adopted Jews.

It seems to us very amusing—the idea that that handful of Jews at the further end of the Mediterranean, with their cramped sys-

SUNDAY MORNING, April 7, 1872. Lesson: Luke XV. Hymns, (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 123, 877, 597.

tem, their specialties, their ordinances, their modes of worship, their temple-service, should be so ignorant of its unadaptedness to to the qualities of men, to their necessities, to their individual peculiarities, to their race-elements, as to suppose that before the end should come everybody would have to be compressed into the Jewish church. This seems very singular to us—or it would, if we were not ourselves under just the same delusion. Our sect—the sect to which each one of us belongs—is doing again what the Jews of old did. Everybody believes in the universal extension of the church. Everybody believes that his denomination is to receive into itself all sorts of people, and that they are to be ground over, and remolded, into little Baptists, or little Methodists, or little Congregationalists, or little Episcopalians, or little Presbyterians, or little Roman Catholics. We think that every man on earth is to be named after our sect, just as the Jews thought that every man on earth was to become an adopted Jew before he died. What they exhibited was nothing but a wide extension of that conceit which by nature belongs to us all.

The Jews believed that the temple in Jerusalem would be to all races of men in the world the same that it was to them. They believed that pilgrimages would always be made to Jerusalem, and that the temple-worship would remain to the end of time. The greatest shock which the Jews ever experienced was that which was caused by the overthrow of Jerusalem, the temple, the altar-worship.

Christ taught that the time was coming, and that it had set in when worship should be universal. And he taught that it should be untied from any compulsory externality; from forms, ordinances, conscience compelling beliefs. Not that Jesus declares that it shall be untied from forms and ordinances and beliefs, but his disciples understood it so. Paul taught that in Christ circumcision availed nothing, and that days, and fasts, and ceremonies, and ordinances and uncircumcision, were matters of relative indifference. He did not teach that there was no need of external instrumentation, but he taught that it was subordinate to the spirit. He taught that men were left to their own option in regard to these things, and that none of them were masters of others' consciences. He taught that every man was free before God, and had a right to take good wherever he could find it, under any circumstances—in the temple or out of it; in the cathedral or out of it; in the church or out of it. He taught that men were at liberty to accept religious truth, whatever form it came in; that man was imperially free by the edict of his Creator, and had a right to find his way to

God, with or without help, as it seemed best to him. He taught that henceforth there should be universal liberty among men—not to do what they pleased, but to find their way from their lower nature up to their higher, and to take that way which proved to be the easiest and best for them. They were bound by no hierarchy. There was no particular place where they must go. There was no round of services which they must observe whether it did them good or not. There were no articles of philosophy to which they must subscribe whether they understood them or not. There was no externality which had authority to say to men, "You must conform to this, or you cannot be saved." The teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ was this: that God is a Spirit, and that whoever worships him must do it in spirit. It does not make any difference, when you are worshiping, if a dozen acolytes or priests swing the censer,—that does not alter the fact of your worshiping or not worshiping. If you find that by having a ladder of form, by having things written in a book, you can ascend better, there is no objection to your having such a ladder; but if your neighbor can fly, and can ascend better without a ladder than with one, he has a right so to fly. The man who worships God must worship him in spirit and in truth. There must not be merely a recurring ritual, a set of observances, something to do at just such a time, the making of genuflexions in just such a way, the performing of some perfunctory duties, and calling that religion. God must be worshiped in truth. There must be a genuine glow of feeling. The heart must be overflowing with love. We must worship as the spirit worships. How do I worship when my heart, in the fullness of love, goes out to my mother, or to my father, or to my companions? God calls upon the human heart to lift itself up to him in the loyalty, the enthusiasm, the zeal of love. Just such love as we give to each other, purified and lifted up immeasurably, is that love which God wants from us, and demands. But there is no command, and there is no obligation, as to the way in which it shall be attained. If you can come into this state of mind in one way better than another, you are at liberty to do so; and if another man can attain it in another way, he has a right to his way. No man can say, "You must get it as I do."

Very soon the Christian church adopted the idea of the Jews—namely, that the church of God on earth was not only to be an organic structure, but that there was a definite, prescribed, exclusive, and authoritative external form. That there is a definite organic structure, and that there always will be, I believe, just as I believe that there will always be a definite

school for teaching young people how to read. It is not indispensable. A child may learn to read without the aid of his father or mother, and without the aid of schools. Many a poor slave has done it. Many men learn many things without a teacher or professor. Yet experience teaches us that intelligence is acquired more easily and surely by means of educational institutions; and we say that schools and academies and colleges will last to the end of the world. But they are not obligatory or authoritative. Yet we advise men to employ them as the best instruments for gaining an education.

The probability is that men will always journey, and that they will journey by highways and turnpikes and railroads; but if a man chooses to go across-lots, he has a right to do it. No man is bound to go by the railway. He may travel on foot, or on horseback, or in a wagon, if he prefers to. But probably there will always be cars as the most expeditious and best means of traveling.

It is said, "When you say that churches are not necessary, you disown the conditions of human nature." I do not disown them at all. I suppose that to the end of the world there will be definite external organizations—churches, with their methods and symbols and ordinances; but God did not make them, nor ordain them, in any other sense than that in which he formed families—civil institutions,—science, literature, or anything else that is founded in human nature; in any other sense than that in which he made and ordained Homer's poems, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. He made Homer and Milton, and caused the inspiration by which they brought out their poems; but those poems were only indirectly ordained by him. There is a church, as I believe there always will be—a historic body, composed of groups of men associated together for purposes of worship; but it is purely and merely an instrument—and from the human side, too. There is not a church on the face of the earth that has any exclusive divine stamp on it. God has not written his name on any one Christian church on the globe more than another. The church as it is, is constructed by men. All things which belong to it are so Occidental, modern, scholastic, that if you undertook to put them into the cradle where they came from they would not fit.

Then there are those who feel that perhaps there may be a little too much made of the external forms of the church, and who are disposed to let out the harness one or two holes on that subject, but who say, "The great doctrines are not going to be changed." They hold that there was a definite deposit of absolute truth, that it was committed to the churches, that it is contained in their printed sym-

bols, and that it is going to prevail, without much alteration, throughout the world, and clear down to the end of time.

The Arian and his school think that Arianism contains the precious doctrine; the Arminian and his sect think that Arminianism holds the precious doctrine; the Calvinist and those who agree with him think that Calvinism formulates the precious doctrine; and among the Calvinists, the Supralapsarians, the Sublapsarians, the High Calvinists, the Low Calvinists, and Calvinists of every shade and degree, think, every one of them, that they have struck the right view. They do not say that there will not be a little modification, some slight change, a difference in the emphasis here and there; but they claim that their distinctive views are to go all over the world.

Thus Christians perceive the stumbling-block of the Jews. They perceive that the Jews did not believe what was the real truth—namely, that the ultimate church which Christ had in his mind was not a mere organization, but the Race—Mankind. They see that although out of that race a few who were assembled together were called *churches*, that is, *assemblies*, they were but the first-fruits of that which Christ was seeking. He said, "The field is the world." The world, the race, the whole body of mankind, and nothing less than that, was to be Christ's church. We divide men up into denominations, sects, schools, and so on; but, after all, the divine ideal is, that the church is yet to include all men, everywhere, and under all circumstances. It is not meant to hold up as specially divine this church or that church, this sect or that sect, this denomination or that denomination, any of the various religious bodies, or all of them, but to represent them as so many forces seeking to bring the whole human family up into spirituality, and into a knowledge of God. The human family, the race, the *whole* race—that is the divine conception of the final, future church; and the future church will not be built until that idea is accepted, and until large strides are made toward the accomplishment of it.

The church of the future we may now inquire into with some light, I think, from these views—not so much into its definite and exact affirmations, as into some of its more general aspects and conditions.

1. The church of the future is to be looked for, not in the prevalence of any single form of worship, or any philosophic creed,—though both of these will go along subordinately as working forces,—but in the condition of the human race. It is not to be an organized thing, with ecclesiastical lines thrown around about it; or,

if ecclesiastical lines are thrown around about it, they will be merely auxiliary.

When the careful cook compounds her material, and gathers on her table the flour, she puts it in a pan. And the eggs—they are beaten up, and worked into the flour, in the pan. And the leaven is put into the flour, in the pan. And the sugar is worked in, in the pan. And the suet is worked up, in the pan. The whole mass is beginning, now, to be most tempting to the eye of the child, who is waiting to see the raisins go in. And they go in. All these choice ingredients are in the pan, being worked up; and the cook says, "Now, my child, do you see what a precious pan that is? I have heard people run out against *pans;* but I tell you, there is nothing like pans in cooking."

Well, is it the pan or the pudding that is precious? The pan is the thing to mix it up in, to be sure; but is that or the contents the most important thing? I do not suppose that to the end of the world cooks will be able to do their work best without a table, without pans, without dishes, without spits and skewers, without ovens, and a hundred other things; but it is what is prepared by means of these things, it is the food, that is of supreme importance.

I do not suppose there will ever be a time before the end of the world in which it will not be necessary to compass education by definite institutions of various kinds. In the great work of education there must be schools of every sort for molding men; but, after all, these are only instruments. They have no overt divine sanction. They need none. They will spring from men's natures and necessities. They are safe, useful and normal.

So, in the course of religion, this sect is but a kitchen, and that sect is but a kitchen, where the loaf is prepared; and the loaf is mankind. God looks upon the Race. Men look upon narrow sects. The ineffable Anglo-Saxon race, which thinks it is to be the frosting of the loaf, or the plum at the bottom, will be in, too, at the final baking. But I take it that the Celtic race, the Romanic tribes, and the Orientals, will go in as well.

Why, we are just as conceited and arrogant in our day as the Jews were in their day. They despised the Gentiles, and we pity but despise the Gentiles. We feel toward people outside of our church about as the Jews did toward people outside of Jewry. Men out of Christendom are deemed outcasts. If they are in a church which we do not regard as the true church, we do not think them quite so bad. We have not the feeling that the heart of God is open to all mankind, in present pity, in real tenderness, in a true Providence, and that the church is to be, not a

sect but Humanity, from horizon to horizon, and from pole to pole; that Indians, Africans, Ethiopians, all men, barbarous or civilized, bond or free, high or low, good or bad, belong to God's great future church which will not be rounded out and completed until they are spiritualized. And all the methods by which you take this great heterogeneous race, and lift it up from its degradation, and mold it from animalism into spirituality, and give it commerce with God, and sympathy and communion with the holy powers above, are useful instruments, but only instruments. They are means not ends. They are not the things for which Christ died or God's providence is reigning. The condition of the human family is the real thing.

Local churches, national churches, are but rills or streams flowing into the Ocean, until that day shall come when the "earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The smallest rill is of use. The navigable river is invaluable. But none of them, not the Amazon, is the Ocean!

Now, I believe that if the Church of the Future becomes so far founded and built up that men shall be able to point to it as an entity, it will be when the whole human family is developed, civilized, Christ-like. The whole race must advance. You cannot carry up any nation to its maximum height until you learn how to carry up too all the nations that are below it. You know it was said that the prophets and the patriarchs died before they saw the things which were promised them, "that they without us, should not be made perfect." The world is an organic whole. As long as any limb or member suffers, the whole body will suffer. No civilized nation can carry itself up above a certain line without carrying up all below it. And God will not permit a church, any more than a nation, to go high up in the scale toward perfection and leave everything else behind it. There must be a common preparation and organization and economy by which the whole race of mankind shall be removed from basilar to spiritual conditions. When the whole human family, of every grade and color and name, of every conceivable condition,are gathered into one substantial brotherhood, and are severally, in their own ways, beginning to live as sons of God, then you will have the divine influence encircling the whole, and that will be the Church of the Future. That church will be no little ark carrying forty persons across the flood, and leaving all the rest of the world to drown. The church of the future is to be the people of the globe, all their tears and sorrows gone, with strong bodies in health, in harmony with the laws of their earthly condition, in living sympathy with invisible realities, in communion with God and

angels; the whole race lifted up, and all flesh seeing the salvation of the Lord—that is the church of the future. "The field is the world," said Jesus. Even so; amen. The field *is* the world.

2. In the great church of the future men will employ educating institutions and doctrinal forms; but such things will fall out of their present idolatrous position. Rome, Canterbury, Geneva, New England, will all alike be useful, and will all alike be relative and subordinate. The ideal of the church is higher than that of the means by which it is to be compassed. That will be the true way of belief and of worship and of conduct which brings the individual and the mass of mankind fastest and highest toward their true manhood.

Will the Church of the Future have a creed? Of course it will. What is a man who has no beliefs? What would be the moral worth of bodies of men without any moral convictions, without definite ideas of right and wrong, of virtue and evil, of human nature, of its relations to duty, of God, Providence, moral government, Death and Immortality?

But it is doubtful if any of the creeds which expressed men's best thoughts of God and duty, at any age foregoing, will survive the changes which growth in knowledge and the evolutions of the human race will produce. The changes will be more in form, proportion, and emphasis, probably, than in the root-facts, around which Christian Creeds have clustered.

Belief in the existence and universal authority of a Personal God will never die out of the world. The growth of man, and the evolution of society, will fill the divine attributes to our conception with qualities transcendently nobler than our impoverished experience hitherto has set forth.

The moral government of God will come forth into a clearer light by all the researches which disclose the nature of men, and the laws of nature, and the methods of improving and governing mankind.

The sinfulness of man, its nature, extent and consequences, has given rise to endless debate and dissension. Time will only confirm and illustrate the *fact*, however much philosophy may change the theories about it. Much that has been indiscriminately called Sin, will under clearer light be regarded as ignorance, infirmity, hereditary disease, race-peculiarity, unskillfulness in the use of moral faculties, crudeness, inexperience, sympathetic bias; but after every discrimination and subtraction, it will be left clear that mankind are also sinful in a sense implying *choice*, and carrying with it blameworthiness and desert of penalty. The race is a sinful race as well as an

undeveloped one, and needs the divine interposition for its rescue and regeneration, and the future church will believe that fact.

Nay more, men are in such a sense basilar, and so naturally attracted to the earth, that I believe it will be a part of universal truth, that all men need the influence of the Spirit of God for inspiration, growth, and spiritual perfection. As no flower can lift itself up, but is drawn by the light of the sun; so no soul will ever lift itself up except by the inspiration of the divine spirit. By that inspiration men will be lifted into the higher life—will be born again—will be brought into the spiritual kingdom, and under abiding spiritual influences.

That by education under divine influences men will rise to a higher potency in all their nature, is, I believe, a fact that will be a doctrine of the church of the future.

The great doctrine of moral sequences will, I think, be a part of the belief of universal Christendom in the future. I suppose that the necessity of suffering for transgression is eternal. When millions and millions of ages shall have rolled away, and you are in this sphere or that sphere, standing by the throne of the Eternal or on the farthest orb that sweeps through space, unaccomplished in its destiny, there will be found one universal law—namely, that obedience to divine law expressed in man's nature will produce happiness, and that disobedience will produce misery. Not that every disobedience will be eternal in its consequences to each individual; but the system or constitution which makes obedience pleasurable and disobedience painful, the system of moral sequences, which teaches that the soul that sins shall die and that the soul that obeys shall live—that system will go on for ever. It is not secular, local or transient. It belongs to the eternal order of the universe. If all that happens under this great law were painted in its length and breadth; if all its consequences could be brought out and known in this world, if all the effects of secret diseases, and hidden crimes, and harbored animosities, and moral transgressions, in men, could be registered and disclosed,—there is no monkish legend of penalty, no representation of suffering, that could compare with them.

While we need no further illustration of the sinfulness of man and his need of spiritual enlightenment and susceptibility to it, the world does need a larger revelation of the restorative power of the divine nature acting upon the human soul. In this direction it may well be believed that in the Church of the Future, the vicarious suffering of Jesus, illustrated from all the experiences of love among men, will grow to a proportion and grandeur never yet imagined; that the medicating power of Celestial Love upon the human soul

will have been disclosed in such radiance as shall fill the world with the light of redemption as from a new sun.

These great truths are only parts, inflections, of the truths of manhood itself. They are revealed to us in the Bible; but I believe they would have been found out in the process of time, even without this revelation.

3. In the church of the future, ordinances will be hints, helps, but never authorities. In the light of the sublime unity of the human race in the future; in the light of the relations of men to God and to each other; in the light of these great central doctrines of spirituality in the soul—ordinances of every description will be reduced to their proper level. They are like a child's clothes. Every child needs clothes; but the clothes are not the child. Nor is the child's character determined by the clothes which he wears. They are like school books; useful helps, but not yokes.

There are in different neighborhoods different machines for cutting grass and wheat; but in estimating the value of a man's crops the question is not whether he uses the Buckeye or the Clipper, the Hussey or the McCormick, or any other machine: the question is, "How many tons of grass and how many bushels of wheat does he raise to the acre?" When you wish to know what a man's success has been in raising fruit, you do not ask what style of culture he adopted, or what tools he used, but how much his trees yielded. It is the result, and not the kind of spade or hoe or pruning-knife he used, that determines what his success has been.

"By their fruits ye shall know them."

That is a good ordinance which helps men to be better, and that is a poor ordinance which does not help anybody to be better.

Men make idols of ordinances. They make middle walls of partition of them. They say, "I am bound, ecclesiastically, to consider you not a Christian. I recognize your meekness and humility; I recognize that you are just and sympathetic; I believe that you are really a child of God; but still you are not in the regular order, because you have not been immersed." "Yes, I have." "Ah, well, you may have been immersed; but the man had not who immersed you." "Yes," says another, "but you do not hold the true doctrine of bishops, and the whole doctrine of the church." "Yes, I do." "Ah, but you hold it after the Anglican sort, and not after the Roman." So men go on raising objections.

I do not seek to turn men from sympathy with churches, nor from the use of ordinances, nor from any form of administering truth that experience has shown to be wise and useful. But is it not time that men should learn that in Christianity the in-

terior life and spirit were the subject of divine command, and that the externals of religious associations were left to be determined by the experience of Christian men? The necessity of social intercommunion in religious things is the root of the church, and is as old as the creation of man. During his whole life Christ was an obedient member of the Jewish Church. We have no record of any plan of another church. We have the clearest evidence that his apostles did not regard themselves as the founders of a new church. They remained in the Jewish Church. They anxiously cleared themselves from the imputation of having departed from it. The directions which they gave to early Christians were either to communities where no Jewish organization had any visible existence, or where the disciples, yet in the Jewish church, had instituted social religious meetings of their own, just as Wesley's followers, during all his life-time, were members of the Church of England, though having a religious economy of their own existing within it.

But there is abundant evidence that the apostles, while distinctly recognizing external organizations, helps, customs, &c., put them all into the place of servants. The Spirit of Christ set men free. The liberty of man in Christ Jesus was a theme of constant jubilation. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, *but faith, that works by love.*"

The inward soul ruled all outward conditions! "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink (sacrificial offerings—parts of temple service) but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Manhood is the sovereign thing. All customs and usages that help it derive their authority from their helpfulness. If manhood exists, no ordinance can rise up and command obedience, as if there was some mystic benefit in an ordinance besides the service which it could render to the soul!

It is moral quality; it is exalted manhood; it is spiritualized human nature that religion seeks to produce. And that is what we are all working for. We are working for it by schools and by churches. Among churches, we are working for it by those that are High, and by those that are Low. We are working for it by the simple voice of the Book. We are working for it by the ordained priest and by the man who never had a hand on his head—except his mother's. We are working for it as we please. And it is the fruit which we produce that determines our fitness for the work. If you make men better, you are ordained; but if you do not make men better, you are not ordained. The great end rules the instruments, and is superior to them all.

4. In the Church of the Future not only may we expect that great light will have been thrown upon the truths of Sacred Scripture, but that there will be such a reconciliation between revealed truth and the truth of science that they will cöperate and harmonize as parts of a common revelation. It is not possible that the Bible and the revelations of science should be in antagonism, and yet both proceed from the same God. If there continues to be a conflict between them one or the other must yield, and the experience of ages leaves us in no doubt which will accept modification and come into harmony by new interpretations. But, in the far future day it is our hope that the grand spiritual truths of Holy Scripture will receive interpretation and confirmation from the revelations of science—no longer "falsely so called." Then the distinction between secular and religious, sacred and profane, revealed and natural will be much narrowed even if not entirely done away. There will be a change in men's notions of the comparative sacredness of truths. All truth proceeding from God will be divine and sacred. The decrees of God wherever promulgated will be alike sacred. Truths will take their rank not by their method of discovery, nor by the channel through which they come to men, but by their relations to the higher or lower nature of man, by the greater or less power of exalting man to his sonship in God.

Truths once disclosed, proved, and accredited, will thenceforth stand simply on their own bases. A truth discovered by a philosopher will be as true as if spoken by an infallible prophet. The decrees of God set forth by Natural Laws will be as sacred as if they had been promulgated from Sinai. Nature and religion will stand upon a common level, not by lowering religion to the plane of men's former misconceptions of nature, but by lifting our conceptions of nature up to the plane of spiritual and divine things. For a long time religious men have regarded nature as a grand antagonism to religious systems. Human nature has been contemned, as if the misuse of normal faculties was man's true nature. They have treated divine thoughts recorded in the material world as if they were not only outside of all revelation, but as if they impose on men no moral obligations, whether of faith or of obedience. By a natural reaction, men are now rushing to the other extreme, and doubt all truth that claims to be a revelation from God through inspired human faculties. This cannot last. The final science and the final religion will own brotherhood. Again the Heavens will declare the glory of God, again the earth will show his handiwork. When men are better, and better understood then God will shine out in clearer lines, and science will be heard saying, "The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

In that day teachers will widen their sphere. Ministers will no longer gather their materials from a narrow and technical theology. They will accept God's Word as travelers do geography and as sailors do their charts, not as containing the things of which they speak, as if a Book were a world, but as pointing them out, describing them, and sending men outside of the book or chart, to the thing signified.

In that day Revelation will be larger, wider, and far more nearly universal than men have thought. Nature will no longer be thought to vulgarize religion, but religion will have taught us to behold a sacredness and moral meaning in nature to which we are now mostly blinded.

5. To many of the views now advanced stout objections will spring up.

It will be asked, are not men already little enough mindful of religious institutions? Is there any need of divesting them of the little authority which remains?

Men have cherished a kind of idolatry of forms, ordinances, and religious usages. They are now dispossessed of such superstition. It will be vain to revamp the old notions. They are fainting and failing. There is but one course to save men's regard for religious institutions, and that is to put them upon grounds of reason, and good use. If religious institutions are doing good there can be no better reason than that for maintaining them. Men will preserve on rational and practical grounds customs and usages which they will reject on grounds of authority.

There can be no more pestilent illusion than that which leads men to believe that nothing is stable or safe which has not a direct authorization from God. How fairly grounded is the Family, and yet no pattern is given for it! Civil government thrives and renews itself after every revolution, not upon a divine rescript, but upon that organic necessity divinely created in man for society and for social order. Schools are just as successful in their sphere as churches are in theirs, and yet there is no Scripture charter for common schools. The schoolmaster does not think it needful either for his authority or for the perpetuity of his order, to trace back his pedigree to some pedagogical apostle. God is nearer to us than the apostles are! Why should men go drifting back for eighteen hundred years to find the apostles when God is right overhead? There can be no better ground for any ordinance or institution than its usefulness. If it be needed no authority can suppress it. If it be useless no authority can long maintain it, if reason rule and superstition is banished.

But will not such a doctrine of liberty in all religious things tend to such individualism as will break up all cohering activity and send men off with centrifugal force into fragmentary sects, until all economy of force is lost, and men lie as so much unorganized sand on the shores of time? Has liberty then proved destructive to unity and wise organization in civil affairs? in the realm of intellectual life, or in the industrial affairs of men?

What has tended to create sects? It is the notion that men have had committed to them—a definite, divine plan of church order or ordinance, or a creed of absolute truth, which they and no one else possessed, and which it was their solemn duty to propagate at all hazards. If persecution be applied to them, like fire on clay, it will harden them into solid forms.

The moment that men accept the truth, that it is the spirit that giveth life, while the letter killeth, that the one important thing is manhood in Christ Jesus, and that any variety of means and instruments may be tested and employed, they will no longer feel that "they are the people, and wisdom shall die with them." Sects spring from the false notion that Christ determined any form of church, any system of church order, or any systematic creed, and from the religious conceit that each sect has the exclusive possession of the divine council, and is bound to propagate it!

A true liberty in religion will lead to order, concentration with elasticity, and harmony in infinite diversity. Many men yearn for this larger liberty and this true catholicity, but they fear that it will lead to a decadence of religious fervor, of real faith in invisible and divine things, that it will send men adrift into all vague and wild speculations, and that the world will be left without churches, or religious teaching, and be overspread with a clear but cold and cheerless material philosophy.

But religion is not an artificial want, hanging on men like a parasitic plant, beautiful, but with only mechanical adhesion to the bough from which it swings and blossoms. The moral sentiments, from which all religion springs, are an integral part of man's nature. They may be undeveloped, or wrongly developed, but extinguished they cannot be. Man craves a moral stimulus as really as he does intellectual or social. He is a worshiping creature; he bears deep within him the sentiments of faith, of conscience, of benevolence, of aspiration. They are as much parts of his organic life as intellect or domestic love, or self-esteem.

This is the same kind of fear that shuddered and prophesied evi when the doctrines of liberty were proclaimed against arbitrary governments. Destroy the monarch and men will lose the spirit of

allegiance! Take away the throne and men will lose the love of country! Paralyze the strong hand and men will rush into storms of anarchy, and civil institutions will founder in the universal whirl!

But it has been demonstrated that liberty gives stability to civil government, that laws flourish best among a free people, and that the organization of society is far better attended to when intelligence and democratic liberty prevail, than under any other circumstances.

In like manner the need of the soul, the hunger for the religious element will always secure sufficient means and ministrations, if men are left free. Liberty will multiply, not diminish churches; it will intensify, not deaden, the spirit of fellowship. Out of liberty will spring infinite variety and versatility, so that the Church of the Future, like a garden of the Lord, will have not one, but myriad flowers, each by contrast or harmony helping the others. One tree of life, but "twelve manners of fruits."

But did not the inspired writers speak of churches, and were they not under the apostles authority and subject to their direction? These churches were simply "assemblies" of believers. They were groups of men banded together for mutual help. To each was given such counsel as it needed. But, except the great canons of morality, and the simple facts of Christ's life, there was no organization or usage common to all alike which was not subject to the changes required by national customs, to the exigencies of different places, and in short to the laws of convenience and expediency. Church organization was extremely simple and adapted itself to circumstances with plastic facility, and was as unlike the rigorous forms of later days as the old and hardened bark of the hickory tree is to the soft and semi-fluid alburnum within, which is always taking the form of the tree while it is at the same time changing and augmenting it!

The great question which concerns us all is that of immortality. Am I near the verge and end of myself? Am I made to tick and keep the hours of this mortal sphere only? When I am done here, shall I be run down forever, never to move again or record the hours of time? Or do I belong to the horology of the universe? Passing through life, do I enlarge my sphere? Do I fit myself to live more nobly, more fruitfully, with augmented sweep of being? Is that true? That is the truth which is pre-eminent, standing above every other. The problem is, how to live here so as to live surely and well there. And all the truths which come to us in this lower sphere, civilizing society and Christianizing nations, are important

as lifting men up out of vulgarism, animalism, bestiality, selfishness and pride, into the serener latitudes of faith and love in the Holy Ghost. What truths are good for is to create manhood; and they are good in proportion as they have the power to exalt the idea of manhood and inspire its realization! Food is good, and good only, in proportion as it nourishes the body. And God's truth is food. It is the manna of God rained down into this world. This will be recognized in the church of the future.

When men would discuss with you the Church of the Future, tell them that with definite organization it will have infinite diversity. It will not be so much a temple, as a city with endless variety of structure, with uses and ornaments expressed in a hundred ways; but that in spirit it will be one; in creed one; and that creed and spirit will be, LOVE TO GOD AND LOVE TO MAN!

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Thou, O God, art unsearchable. Such is the greatness of thy nature, and so far doth it transcend all the circuits of our thoughts, and all the lines of our experience, that no man by searching can find thee out or understand the Almighty unto perfection. Lo! these are but parts of thy ways which we discern in this sphere. Not the little round of human life can so magnify itself as to represent the grandeur and the glory of that life which is the life of life. Nor can we understand the ways of God among men—not even with the light of thy truth shining upon us. Thou hast manifested something; and yet the whole doth not yet appear. Thou hast made known to us what we cannot understand; but we accept it, feeling that it goes out beyond our reach, and is constantly eluding our thought and our feeling; and we wait for the revelation of that bright day when we shall be disabused of life, unclothed as to the flesh, emancipated from earthly constrictions, and when we shall be as the angels of God, and shall know as we are known. We know, O Lord our God, but little. We know the way. Thou art the Way, Jesus. Thou art the Truth. Thou art the Life. What if we cannot understand all the teachings of holy men, we behold the beauty of thy life. We know what was thy spirit. We know what was the character of thy ministry. We behold thee going everywhere, familiar with the lowest, not disdaining the highest, teaching on every side, sweet and blessed to little children, comforting mothers, full of companionship for fathers. We behold thee rebuking things that are evil, that thou mayst cure them. We behold thee standing between the worst oppressions and the oppressed—the oppressions of unjust thoughts—the oppressions of the rigorous and tyrannical selfishness of men over their weaker brethren. We behold thee everywhere breathing sympathy and love upon men. We behold thee making the truths of God's government shine brighter and brighter unto the end. Thou didst bow thine head; and in the midst of the great and mysterious struggles which impended over thee, thou wert steadfast, calm, and persistent to the last, in giving thy life a ransom for many. All the hidden things therein we do not understand. We bring our experiences as so many

lenses to magnify them; but alas! they are wrinkled, and blurred, and distorted. We seek to know what is hidden within, even, as of old, men sought to know the mystery of the ark, desiring to look therein; but still it is hidden. Yet we know that thou art Love; and we know that all the things which men call *terror*, and *pain*, and *threat*, and *justice*, and *indignation*, are but so many instruments of love, and that thou art working in the heaven and throughout the universe for the kingdom of peace, and not for the kingdom of destruction. We believe that the heart of love gushes and goes forth toward the realm of everlasting love. There art thou radiant, resuming again in thy Father's presence the royalties of the divine nature. But thou hast left thyself still lingering in the earth. Thou art still a power among men, enlightening the imagination, quickening the heart, instructing the understanding. Thou art still the Leaven, and art steadily leavening the whole lump. And the creation which has woudrously groaned, mysteriously travailed in pain, until now—what shall it bring forth but the amplitude and royalty of that kingdom of which thou wert thyself the Forerunner, the Founder? As thou hast been its Author, so thou shalt be its Finisher. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

We beseech of thee that we may learn to follow thee, not by the outward life, and not by the things which are prescribed in the church, and not by the form of believing, but in our innermost life. Sanctify our remotest sympathies, the remotest germs of thought and feeling, in us, and wholly bring us into the mood and disposition of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we have thy sympathy for men. May we cease to bound our hearts by the lines of our households. May we cease to look upon those who are not of our nation or lineage as indifferent. May our hearts go out, as thine did, yearning for the world. May we be so clothed with universal sympathy that all men shall be brethren, until we shall feel that we are brothers one with another.

Grant, we pray thee, that we may labor less and less by calling fire from heaven to consume those who are not in agreement with us. More and more may we labor by showing mercy one for another. May we suffer for others; but may we avoid causing them to suffer. We pray that thou wilt make us wise in winning those who are around about us. May the summer of thy love ripen us.

We pray that thou wilt look upon those who are in thy presence, according to their several circumstances. Look upon those whose life seems wellnigh spent in vain. Look upon those who mourn the ruggedness of the way; upon those who are weary with their heavy burden; upon those who scarcely know which way to go, and who need a guide. Disclose thyself to them, and say unto them, "Come unto me, ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." May they take thy yoke and thy burden, and find rest to their souls.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt draw near to those who are mourning the hidings of thy face, and who feel that thou art just in rebuking them. We pray that, whatever may have been their error, and whatever remorse they may experience, they may not add to their past transgression the greater sin of doubting the mercy of God. Oh, that there might be such a sense of God's great compassion and forgiving love, that every soul, however beset, or tempted, or storm-cast, or driven, might still find thee, and rest in thee!

Draw near to all those who have experienced thy providence in an afflictive measure. Why should not thy people suffer, when the Master suffered for them? Are they better than he? Was it needful that the Captain of our salvation should be made perfect through suffering? and can we be

made perfect without it? When much of the fruit that the trees bear is wind-dropped, and the winter binds them, and the storm shakes them, and all the elements exercise them, why should we stand and ask that our life should be forever calm, and that no fruit of ours may fall untimely to the ground? Grant that those who suffer, in thy providence, may feel that it is the Lord that hath done this for good, and that he saith to them, "If ye suffer no chastisement, ye are not my sons."

Wilt thou lift up the hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees, and comfort those who need the consolations of the Holy Spirit.

We pray that thou wilt bless all those who are looking into the future, or who stand shivering with fear, or with despair. Grant that they may be saved by hope. Though fate seems against them; though all their plans seem to fall untimely and blighted; though no friends are raised up to encourage and help them; though the things which are against them are more and mightier than the things which are for them,—may they have faith in God, and hear him saying unto them, "Cast your care upon me, for I care for you." Though their father and their mother have forsaken them though friend and brother have cast them out, though men are averse, and though the way of life is hard as a flint to their feet, may they still hold to this most precious treasure—faith in God and his providence—belief that God will do all things well, and in the end cause all things to work out for their eternal good.

We pray that thou wilt bless all those who are strangers in our midst. Comfort their hearts. If they be in solitude, and if they be homesick, may they have such a sense of the house of God as their home that their spirit shall redeem their body. May they feel that they are with brothers and sisters, and that they are standing in the presence of the heart of God who teaches all to love. And we pray that their hearts which run backward may carry with them everywhere the blessings which they desire for children, for companions, for brethren.

Remember all those whom we love, wide dispersed upon the sea or upon the land. How near they are to thee, though they be far from us! To thee all things are as in one place; and how easy it is for us to commend our children, and our companions, and our friends, to the care of our God who is everywhere. We pray that this day they may feel the thoughts of God which pass all understanding. Be with our dear brethren who may now be singing the hymns of the sanctuary—some in the solitude of the forest, some upon the ocean, and some on distant shores. While we sing, may we feel that we sing with those who are ours, and whose hearts are joined to ours.

Be pleased to bless thy churches everywhere. Grant that thy ministers may endeavor to do good in preaching the truth as it is in Jesus. We pray for the power of that universal sympathy and love which shall unite all churches and all men. And so may heresy die, and love grow strong. We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt build up thy cause, and extend thy kingdom, and fulfill the promises which thou hast made. Glorify thyself in bringing Jew and Gentile—all the earth—into one family, blessed of God and perfected.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

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